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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8530
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7554
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STATE FOR EAP/PD

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SUBJECT: NEW MEDIA, OLD DOGS AND NEW TRICKS: EAP PRESS WORKSHOP
EXPLORES PD MESSAGING FOR A NEW ERA

Summary

1. (SBU) The EAP Press and Information Officers Workshop held in Bangkok, September 14-16, was an opportunity to review strategic responses to broad regional issues, deepen understanding of key messages and policy objectives from the new administration on global issues, and improve understanding of resources and new technologies that can better enable PD officers to promote USG objectives. The workshop gathered more than fifty information officers, public affairs officers, and locally employed media specialists for one of the largest PA workshops ever held in the region. Participants were exposed to a broad range of media tools and ideas to hone their craft and better develop their messaging at their respective posts. (End summary.)

The View from Washington

2. (SBU) A highlight of the conference was a series of DVC conversations between the workshop participants and Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale, Assistant Secretary P.J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell and Ambassador Scott Marciel. Secretary McHale challenged attendees to reach all the people we can through all the methods we can, but warned that "new media" is a tool, and not a strategy.

3. (SBU) Assistant Secretary Crowley said that three top priorities for the Department were non-proliferation, climate change and greater resources for traditional development. Ambassador Marciel

underscored the importance of using metrics to measure PD performance results and discussed the new mission to ASEAN to be established in Jakarta in 2010. Assistant Secretary Campbell reiterated the importance of the issue of climate change and encouraged posts to be more active in promoting U.S. environmental policy. Assistant Secretary Campbell also seconded a suggestion to establish a "media ops-center" or at least the establishment of a media position within the ops-center to respond to crises and the subsequent media spillover without EAP posts having to wait a full day for the "regular" press guidance cycle to operate.

What's the hubbub, bub?

14. (SBU) EAP Media Hub Director Scott Weinhold explained the role of the new regional media hub: to increase and to speed up engagement with broadcast media in the region. The Tokyo-based media hub will assist posts with finding USG officials for local media requests and assist with the quick turnaround of talking points on breaking news. Understanding that the media cycle is moving at ever faster rates and that the media is always hungry for content, the rationale for the media hub is that it's better for USG officials to present on-camera instead of having others speaking for us.

Honolulu and You!

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15. (SBU) Participants heard that Honolulu-based institutions might be some of the most "underutilized resources in EAP." PACOM, the East-West Center, the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies and other organizations based in Hawaii straddle the line between the U.S. and Asia and serve as natural bridges between the two regions. These organizations offer a wide range of opportunities for posts in the form of seminars, conferences and training programs on a wide array of topics and themes.

The Eye that Never Sleeps, The Ear that Never Rests

16. (SBU) While familiar to some of the attendees, the resources and services available from the Open Source Center, which has a bureau in Bangkok, came as a surprise to many. The OSC's full-time monitoring of open media and their analyses make the OSC an important ally for missions hoping to better understand their local and regional media environment. The comprehensive "media guide" provides exhaustive analysis of media organizations by countries and is a handy reference manual for mission PD officers.

Google, MySpace and Facebook, oh my!

17. (SBU) Of particular interest to many of the workshop participants were several hands-on training sessions that dealt with the emergence of New Media, i.e. the social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Hi-5, and other developments in blogging and chatting on-line. In addition to running basic and advanced training on social networks and networking, Christina Tribble provided in-depth exploration of resources available on the internet that can provide media units with better understanding of the potential and possible hazards involved in exploring opportunities in new forms of media.

That's How We Roll

18. (SBU) The workshop concluded with a densely-packed cornucopia of best practices from each of the represented posts and provided attendees with the perfect opportunity to steal their colleague's clever ideas and tried and true methods. While each post labors under different circumstances--resources, audiences, objectives, etc.--many of the good ideas and strategies could be adapted. Ideas like embedding bloggers, tactics like forging an emotional connection with audiences, and ambitious and imaginative use of TV

co-ops and social networking gave participants concrete examples to use.

Conclusion

19. (SBU) This workshop was an excellent kickoff event for the new EAP Regional Media Hub and a key networking and training opportunity for EAP embassy and consulate press experts. The new media workshop sessions demonstrated many exciting new technologies but also highlighted the challenges that can accompany these new outreach methods.

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